

Status of Skyline West

The Bethlehem Gadfly Skyline West, Uncategorized August 2, 2019

(First post in a series on Skyline West.)

You were wondering about the status of this project, weren't you? It involves the demolition of this house at 143 W. Broad. Which was controversial. But approved by Council over the denial by the Historical Commission. Which, of course, caused some additional controversy.



Nicole Radzievich, "Here's why Bethlehem's Skyline West project stalled and when it'll rev up." Morning Call, August 1, 2019.

The Bethlehem Redevelopment Authority on Thursday voted to condemn a pair of tiny properties that stand in the way of Skyline West, a \$15 million project that would bring the first new market-rate apartments to the downtown in 30 years.

The authority wants to acquire the two parcels, totaling 0.05 acres, and add it to the 1.3 acres, leftover property from an urban renewal project, that the authority plans to sell to the developers for the project.

But Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has rights on a part of a parcel near Conestoga Street and an unopened road named Schafer Street. PennDOT says the land is no longer needed for transportation purposes and, under the agreement, would revert back to the last property owners. It's part of a property acquired 70 years ago by Harrison R. and Margaret Meyers. They also own the other parcel the authority wants to acquire.

A 1968 obituary for Harrison Meyers, a long-time Bethlehem steelworker, says his only surviving relative was his widow, Margaret, and she died in 1985, according to newspaper archives. Tony Hanna, the authority's executive director, said the authority can't locate the estate or any heirs.

"It's a friendly taking," Hanna said. He said an appraisal is being done to establish fair market value and the cost of the land, likely nominal, will ultimately be paid by the developers — Musikfest founder Jeff Parks and attorneys Dennis, Garrett and Brandon Benner.

The developers, who unveiled the project January 2018, had hoped to have the apartments ready to rent this year, but now anticipate a 2021 opening.

The sale of the property is contingent on the developer getting regulatory approvals for the project, which is expected to total between 40 and 50 apartments.

The developers cast the project as bringing residents within walking distance of the restaurants and shops in the historic downtown. Parks

called it the missing piece of a redevelopment plan that began with a 1956 master plan that called for the historic district and the restoration of the Moravian Industrial Quarter, which is now included in a National Historic Landmark District. The contemporary-style apartments are to feature balconies, washers and dryers and modern kitchens with gas stovetops. The building will include a fitness center, community room with outdoor deck and a package-receiving system.



Critics say the cost will be a building that contributed to the historic landscape the city has spent decades trying to preserve. The project will require the demolition of 143 W. Broad St., a rundown early 20th century home with Colonial Revival architecture that contributes to the historic district that encompasses part of Main Street.

City Council last year approved the demolition of the building, making the rare decision to go against the advice of its historic board.